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DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO NSC FOR ADAM STERLING

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SUBJECT: STRATEGIC WITHDRAWAL: HUNGARY'S FOREIGN POLICY
STRATEGY

REF: 06 BUDAPEST 2500

Classified By: P/E COUNSELOR ERIC V. GAUDIOSI; REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) Summary: The MFA's efforts to prepare new foreign policy strategy have pleased few in or out of the Ministry, with academics involved in the project complaining of little strategic guidance and less bureaucratic coordination. Foreign Minister Goncz has elected to post various portions of the strategy on a local website in order to promote public dialogue, but has succeeded primarily in emboldening her critics as discussion regarding a potential cabinet reshuffle continues. End Summary.

12. (C) The project began with promise as the first comprehensive look at Hungarian foreign policy in years, concurrent with parallel efforts to prepare a national security strategy (reftel). Although MFA staff reportedly expressed disappointment with the decision to bring in outsiders to participate, the effort did involve respected voices from both sides of the aisle in an effort to promote bipartisan support.

13. (C) Tamas Magyarics, a political scientist affiliated with the opposition, was asked to examine Hungary's neighborhood policy but quickly soured on the project. Contributors were given little sense of the GoH's over-arching objectives, Magyarics observed, and their products were not coordinated with other Ministries, making them "theoretical exercises." Compounding these mistakes, the MFA proceeded to post elements of the strategy on the website of the Hungarian publication HVG. Magyarics believes the entire exercise, and most particularly the decision to put drafts on the internet, reflect the tendency of FM Goncz - a psychologist by training - to "conflate foreign policy and therapy."

14. (C) The incident compounds growing criticism of Goncz. The FM has been a frequent target of opposition parliamentarians for her "lack of professional experience," and has found few defenders in the Ministry or the MSZP. She is reportedly clashing with MFA Political Director Ivan Udvardi, an insider with considerable party backing, and appears unable to establish herself on equal bureaucratic footing with ministerial colleagues such as DefMin Szekeres. With the government making changes in the PM's Office, a cabinet reshuffle is regarded as a possible next step. Much of the current conjecture involves the Foreign Ministry, with rumors ranging from Udvardi's elevation to a wholesale shift which would apportion the MFA to the junior coalition partner SZDSZ after its party elections this spring.

15. (C) Comment: The same lack of political influence that made Goncz a surprise pick as Foreign Minister may now make her expendable. Magyarics and members of ethnic Hungarian communities abroad believe that Goncz was chosen by PM

Gyurcsany "to do nothing," and her impact on policy has been modest at best. We found her recent private comments on Russia, in which she expressed no concern over Moscow's economic expansion, to be particularly wide of the mark, and there remains some question as to how closely she has been following issues such as Afghanistan and Kosovo. Many suggest that Goncz's background would make her a better fit at the Ministry of Health, and we believe the odds that she will be moved over - if not moved out completely - are on the rise. End Comment.
FOLEY